



Morphological and histopathological description of *Myxobolus niger* n. sp. infecting gills of a cold water native cyprinid fish, *Schizothorax niger* from Wullar Lake (India)

Dar SA¹, Kaur H^{3*}, Chishti MZ²

1. Research Scholar, Department of Zoology and Environmental Sciences, Punjabi University Patiala (India)

2. Professor Emeritus, Centre of Research for Development, University of Kashmir, Srinagar (India)

3. Associate professor, Department of Zoology, Panjab University, Chandigarh (India)

*Corresponding author: Dr. Harpreet Kaur email: harpreetbimbura@gmail.com

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General Note



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ABSTRACT

The study was aimed to isolate myxozoan parasites infecting the native carp *Schizothorax niger* (Heckel) commonly called chush collected from fresh water ecosystems of Wullar Lake. Various organs were studied for the presence myxozoan infection. Results revealed prevalence rate of 20% infected with *Myxobolus niger* n. sp. Parasitological examination was done under stereozoom binocular microscope which revealed multiple minute plasmodia on the gills which on rupturing liberated myxospores. Identification upto species level was done on the basis of morphological and morphometric attributes of the myxospores in fresh and in stained preparations. Myxospores of *M. niger* n. sp. were ovoidal or subspherical in frontal view, having broad anterior end and narrow rounded posterior measuring 6.66 x 5.0µm. Polar capsules two, equal, oval in shape with pointed anterior end, measuring 3.33 x 1.66

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µm. Parietal folds and intercapsular process (ICP) absent. Sporoplasm agranular, homogeneous and hemispherical. Sporoplasm agranular, homogenous with a nucleus measuring 0.9µm in diameter. Iodinophilous vacuole present, measuring 1.2µm in diameter.

Key Words: *Schizothorax niger*; *Myxobolus nigeriae*; Wullar Lake, native carp

1. INTRODUCTION

Myxozoans are the members of phylum Cnidaria, parasitic in nature infecting fish as definitive host both in natural and farmed environments (Okamura et al., 2015). Many species have been recorded to cause serious damage to economically important fresh water and marine fish. Most of the infections do not cause any symptoms however many are well known for the serious diseases in trouts, salmon and carps (Lom and Dykova, 1992). Most abundant among the myxozoans are species belonging to the genus *Myxobolus* with as many as 905 species reported worldwide (Eiras et al., 2014) and is the most dominant group among the clade of Cnidarians. With the increasing knowledge of molecular biology and characteristic features such as host, organ and tissue specificity, the misidentification and classification of myxosporean have been resolved (Atkinson et al., 2015).

Kashmir Himalayas the northern part of India having the richest freshwater ichthyofauna especially the local snowtrout which is highly valuable and cheap food fish in this region. This fish occurs in both lotic and lentic water bodies. Various studies related to different parasitic groups have been done on these fishes but no substantial work on myxozoan fauna has been worked out. In North India many species of myxozoan parasites were recorded from freshwater fishes of wetlands of Punjab (Kaur and Singh, 2008, 2009, 2010a,b, 2011a-f, 2012a,b; Singh and Kaur, 2012a-c, 2014a, 2015; Kaur et al., 2013a,b, 2014a,b; Kaur and Attri, 2015).

Therefore, the present study was aimed to study myxosporean parasites of *S. niger* in Wullar Lake (J&K).

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

Live specimens of *Schizothorax niger* were collected from Wullar Lake in Kashmir (India) using gill nets and from local fish markets around the study sites. The live fishes were transported to the Parasitology laboratory at Center of Research for Development, CORD, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, India. The eyes, gills, fins, scales, intestine, visceral organs, and pericardial cavity were examined for myxozoan parasites. Ziehl-Neelsen and Giemsa stains were used to study the myxospore morphology. Identification up to generic level was done with the help of the keys given by (Lom and Dykova, 2006 and Kaur and Singh, 2012a). Species description was prepared according to the guidelines of (Lom and Arthur, 1989). For histopathology, infected gills were cut into small pieces and fixed in Bouin's fixative. Tissue samples were dehydrated in ascending grades of ethanol, cleared in xylene, embedded in paraffin wax, sectioned at 7–8µm thickness and stained with Luna's staining method. This technique demonstrated the location of cysts within the gills and therefore was considered useful in histological diagnosis of the myxosporean parasites. The location of myxosporean plasmodia in different areas of the gills were categorized into types according to Molnar (2002) such as Intralamellar-epithelial (LE) type; 2. Intralamellar-vascular (LV) type; 3. Intrafilamental-vascular (FV) type; 4. Plasmodium located in the gill arch (AC) type. The gill plasmodial index (GPI) was calculated on the basis of number of plasmodia present per gill (one side) visible under the stereozoom binocular microscope and with the naked eye (Kaur and Attri, 2015) 0 - 0 (no infection-0); 1-5 (light infection-1); 5-10 (moderate infection-2); 10-20 (heavy infection-3); 20-50 or more (severe infection-4). Categorization of plasmodia on the basis of size (Kaur and Katoch, 2016).

Type A. Plasmodia visible under binocular microscope size range 40-50 µm

Type B. Plasmodium visible under stereozoom size range 0.2-0.5mm

Type C. Plasmodia visible with naked eye size range 1.5-3.0mm

3. RESULTS

Myxobolus nigeriae n. sp.

Plasmodia

Minute, visible under binocular microscope round to ovoid (Fig. 2), measure 80-100 µm in diameter (Fig. 4), present in gill lamellae (intralamellar vascular type, LV₃), histozoic, 3–5 in number per gill, 100-125 myxospores per plasmodium (Fig. 1). Clinical symptomatology indicated mucous laden gills.

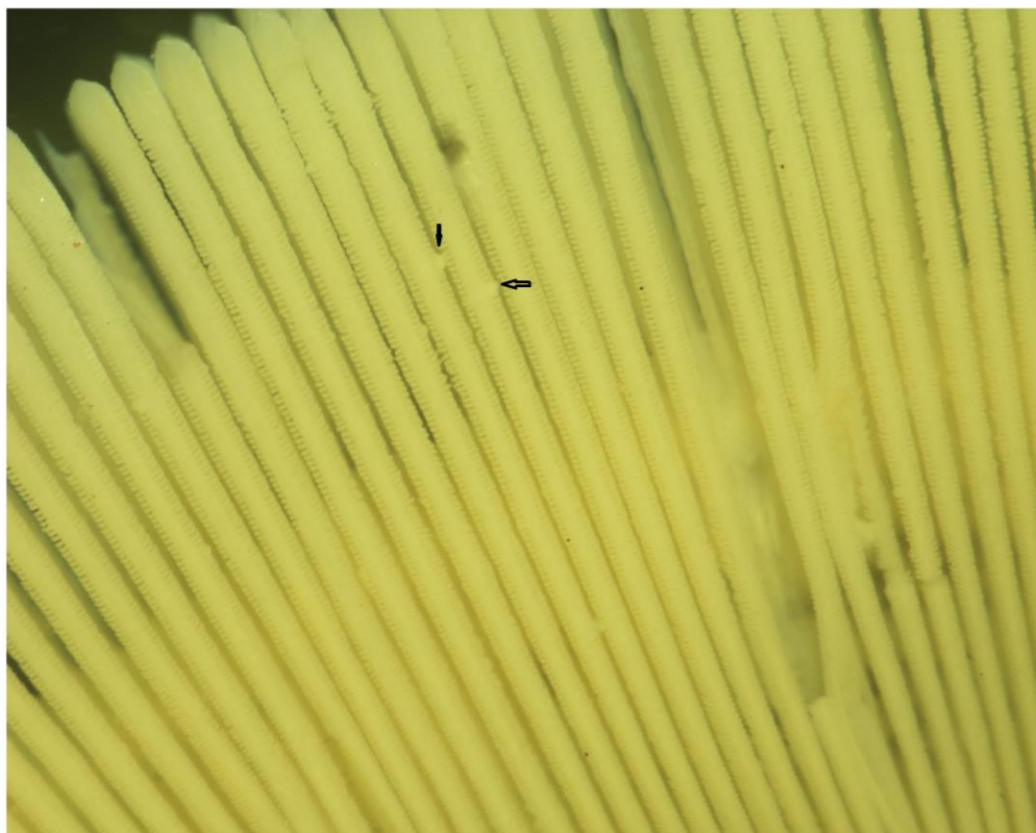


Figure 1. Photomicrograph of infected gills of *Schizothorax niger* showing plasmodia of *Myxobolus niger* n. sp.

Taxonomic Summary

Host: *Schizothorax niger* (Heckel) vern. chush; common name: snowtrout (Cyprinidae)

Locality: Wullar lake, Kashmir Himalayas

Altitudinal zone: 1582m

Type Material: Paratypes are myxospores stained by Ziehl-Neelsen and Iron-haematoxylin, deposited in the Parasitology Laboratory, Department of Zoology and Environmental Sciences, Punjabi University, Patiala, India. Slide no. S/ZN/01.05.2016 and S/G/01.05.2016

Site of Tissue Development: Gill lamellae (Intralamellar vascular type, LV₃)

Prevalence of Infection: 20% (4/20)

Clinical Symptomatology: Mucous laden

Pathogenicity: Distortion of gill lamellae, lifting of lamellar epithelium

Gill Plasmodium Index (GPI): 2 (moderate infection)

Type of Plasmodium: A (Plasmodium visible under binocular microscope, size range 20-200 µm)

Etymology: The specific epithet '*niger*' is based on the specific name of the fish host

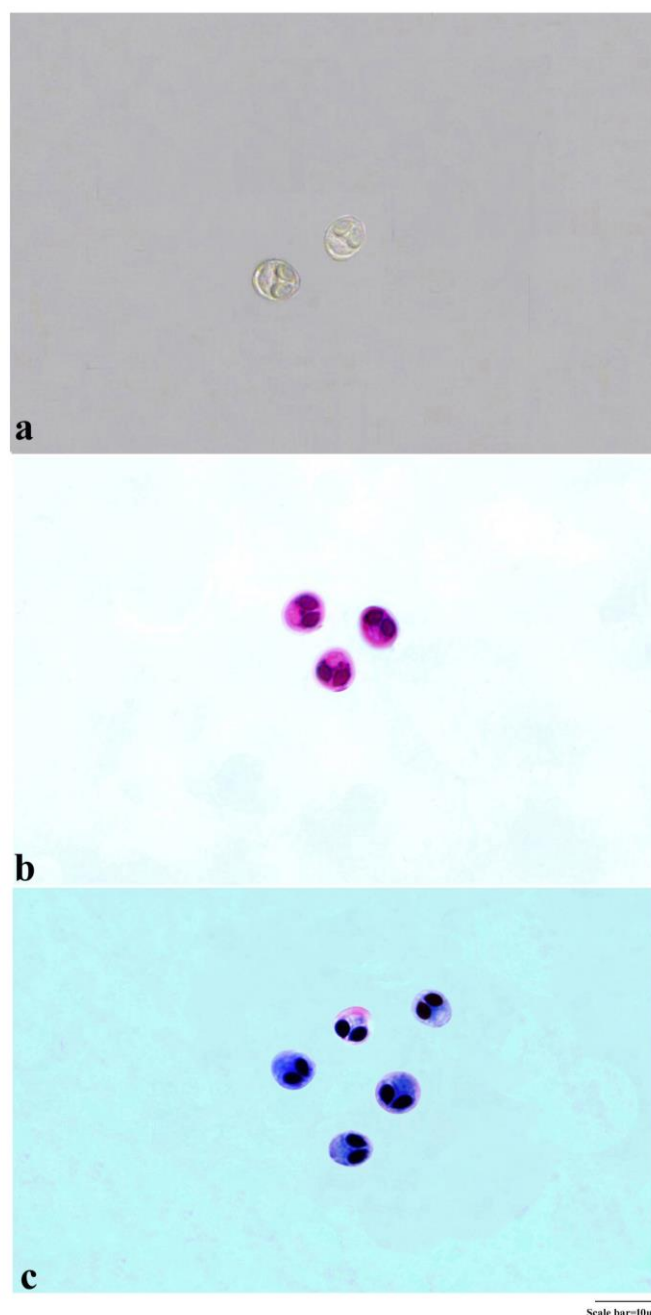


Figure 2. *Myxobolus nigeriae* sp. nov.

a. Fresh myxospores

b. Myxospores stained in Ziehl-Neelsen

c. Myxospores stained in Giemsa

Scale bar=10µm

Description of Myxospore of *M. nigeriae* n. sp.

(Measurements based on 9-10 myxospores in frontal view), (Table I)

Myxospores measure $6.66 \times 5.0 \mu\text{m}$, ovoidal or subspherical in frontal view, having broad anterior end and narrow rounded posterior end. Shell valves $0.6 \mu\text{m}$ in thickness and symmetrical. Sutural line curved and distinct. Parietal folds absent. Polar capsules two, equal, oval in shape with pointed anterior end, measuring $3.33 \times 1.66 \mu\text{m}$, positioned anteriorly inside the myxospore body cavity.

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Polar filaments form 5 coils placed parallel to the polar capsule axis. Intercapsular process (ICP) absent. Sporoplasm agranular, homogeneous and hemispherical. Sporoplasmic agranular, homogenous with a nucleus measuring 0.9µm in diameter. Iodinophilous vacuole present, measuring 1.2µm in diameter.

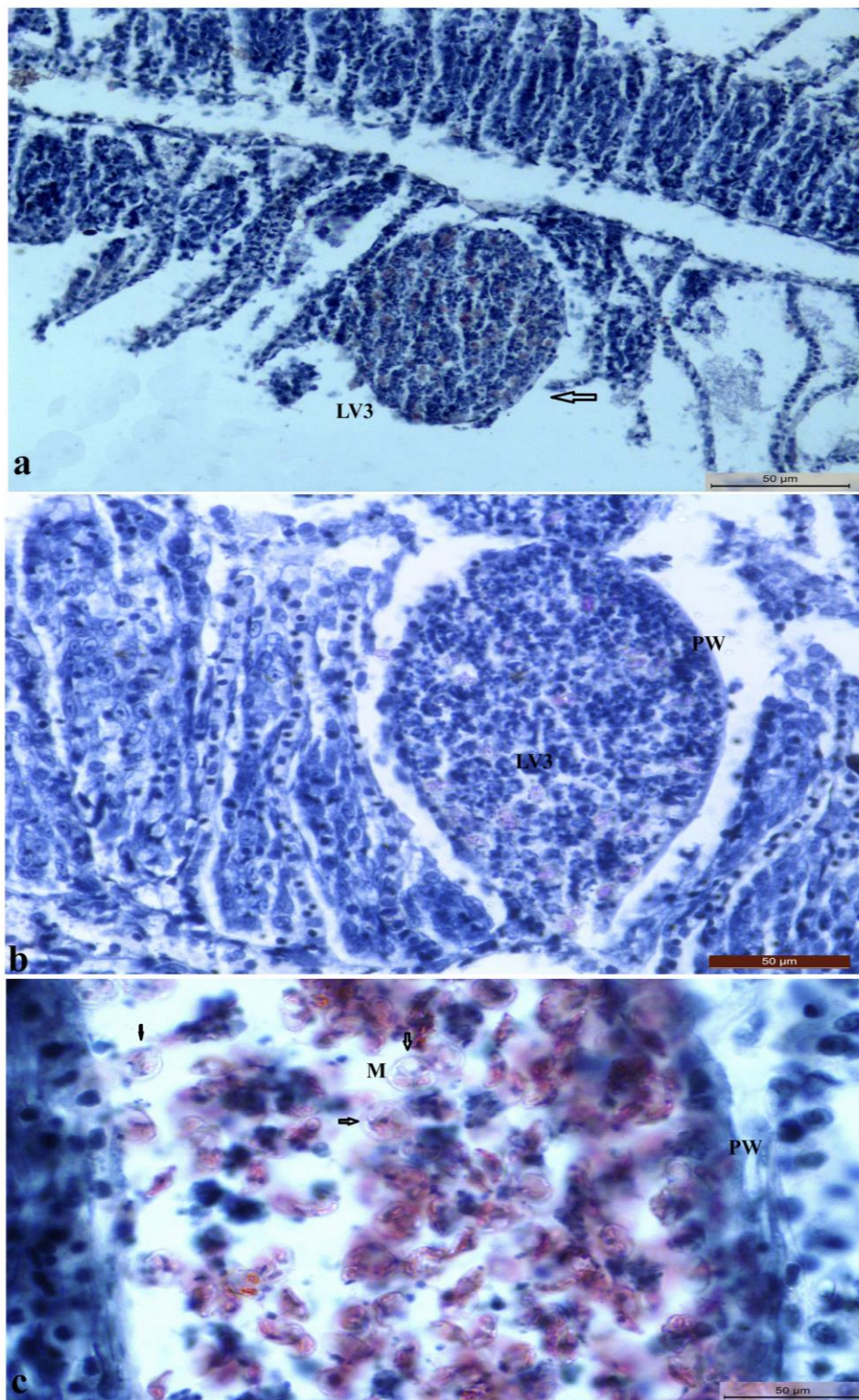
Table I Measurements (µm) and ratio of *M. nigeriae* n. sp.

Characters	Range	Mean Values	SD
LS	6.3-6.9	6.66	0.3
WS	4.8-5.2	5.0	0.2
LPC	3.1-3.5	3.33	0.2
WPC	1.5-1.7	1.66	0.1
Ratio: LS/WS		1.33	
ICP		Absent	
NC		5	
Parietal folds		Absent	

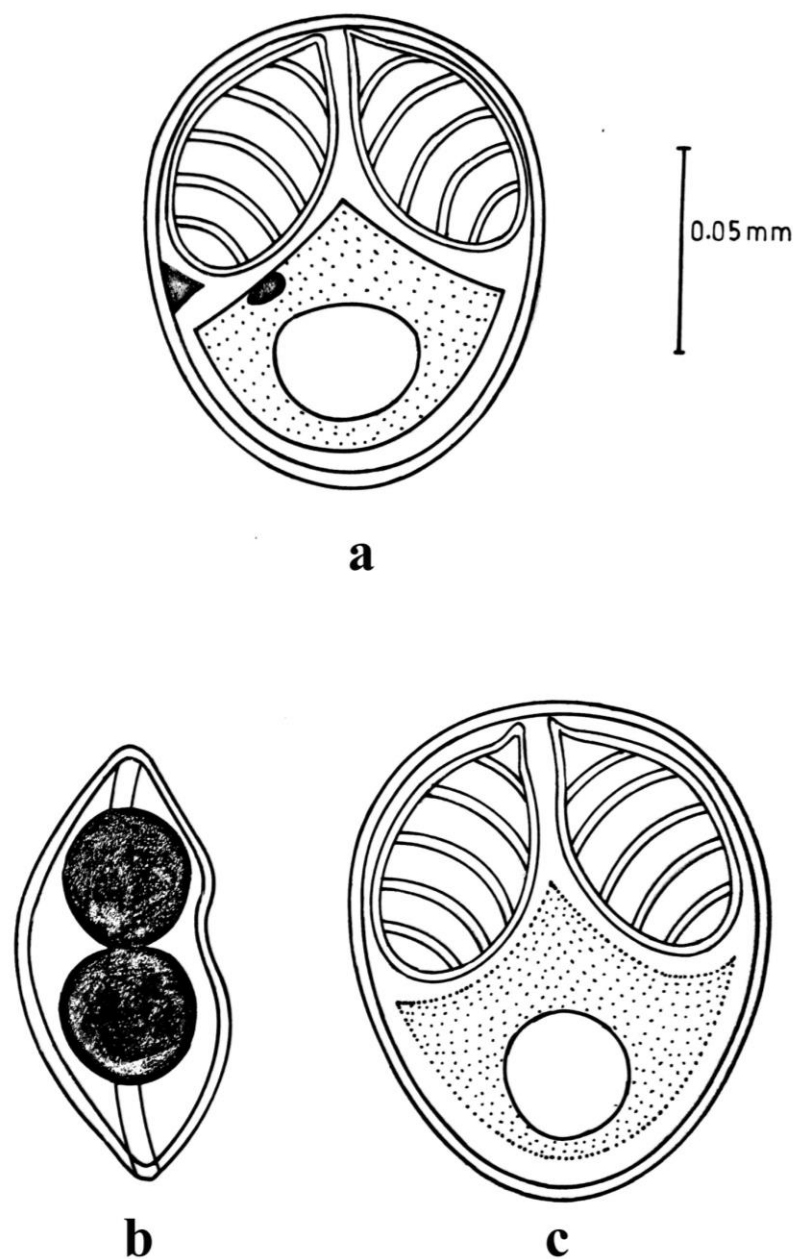
Table II Comparative description of *M. nigeriae* n. sp. with morphologically similar species (measurements are in micrometer)

Species	Host	Site of Infection	Locality	Myxospore size	Polar capsule size	ICP
<i>M. nigeriae</i> n. sp. (Present study)	<i>Schizothorax niger</i>	Gill lamellae	J&K (India)	6.66 × 5.0	3.33×1.66	Absent
<i>M. eirasi</i> Kaur and Singh (2009)	<i>Cirrhinus mrigala</i>	Caudal fin	Punjab (India)	8.6 × 6.7	3.2×1.57	Absent
<i>M. impressus</i> Miroshnichenko (1980)	<i>Barbus barbus</i>	Fin, Gills	Ukraine	12×10	6.2×3.4	Present
<i>M. indirae</i> Kundu (1985)	<i>Cirrhinus mrigala</i>	Head Cartilage, Tail fin	West Bengal (India)	12.6×9.6	4.7×2.2	Absent
<i>M. crucifilus</i> (Qadri, 1962d)	<i>Labeo fimbriatus</i>	Gills	Andra Pradesh (India)	9.5×8.3	4.0-4.5	Absent
<i>M. nodulointestinalis</i> Masoumian <i>et al.</i> (1996)	<i>Barbus sharpeyi</i>	Intestinal wall	Iran	12.6×8.1	3.6×2.4	Present
<i>M. punjabensis</i> Gupta and Khera (1989)	<i>Labeo dyocheilus</i>	Gills, Fin	Punjab (India)	10.86×10.64	5.72× 4.4	Present
<i>M. sushmii</i> Kaur and Singh (2010c)	<i>Labeo rohita</i>	Eye ball	Punjab (India)	9.6 × 8.3	4.70× 3.20(L) 3.10× 2.0(S)	Present
<i>M. blicae</i> Donec and Tozyyakova (1984)	<i>Blicca bjoerkna</i>	Gill filaments	Hungary	12.4×10	6.2×3.4	Present
<i>M. vanivilasae</i> Seenappa and Manohar (1980)	<i>Cirrhinus mrigala</i>	Below scale, Muscles	Karnatka (India)	9×8	3.1×2.3	Present

ICP- intercapsular process



(Figure 3) Histopathology of gills of *S. niger* infected with *M. nigeriae* n. sp.
 a. Section of gill lamellae of *Schizothorax niger* showing LV3 type plasmodium (100x)
 b. Section of LV3 type plasmodia showing myxospores (M) enclosed in plasmodium (400x)
 c. Magnified view of plasmodia showing thick cellular plasmodial wall (PW) and mature myxospores (M) (1000x)



(Figure 4) Line drawings of myxospores of *M. nigeriae* n. sp.

a. Myxospore stained in Ziehl- Neelsen

b. Myxospore in sutural view

c. Myxospore stained in Giemsa

4. DISCUSSION

The present species is compared with myxospores of morphologically similar species i.e *M. impressus* (Miroshnichenko, 1980) infecting fin, gills of *Barbus barbus*; *M. indirae* (Kundu, 1985) infecting head cartilage, tail fin of *Cirrhinus mrigala*; *M. crucifilus* (synonyms *Gyrospora crucifilus* (Qadri, 1962) infecting gills of *L. fimbriatus*; *M. nodulointestinalis* (Masoumian et al., 1996) infecting intestine of *Barbus sharpeyi*; *M. eirasi* (Kaur and Singh, 2009) infecting caudal fin of *C. mrigala*; *M. punjabensis* (Gupta and Khera,

1989) infecting gills and fins of *L. dyocheilus*; *M. vanivilasae* (Seenappa and Manohar, 1980) infecting below scale, muscles and integument of *C. mrigala*; *M. bliccae* (Donec and Tozzyakova, 1984) infecting efferent arteries of gill filaments of *Blicca bjoerkna* and *M. sushmii* (Kaur and Singh, 2010) infecting eye ball of *L. rohita*. (Table II).

The myxospores of *M. nigeriae* n. sp. are characterized in having ovoidal or subspherical shape having broad anterior end and rounded posterior end. In this respect, it is similar to *M. crucifilius*, *M. eirasi*, *M. impressus*, *M. indirae*, *M. nodulointestinalis*, *M. punjabensis*, *M. sushmi* and *M. bliccae*. But the presence of thick band in the sporoplasm of *M. crucifilius* and *M. eirasi* differentiate them from the myxospore of the present species in which sporoplasmic band is absent. Although sporoplasmic thread is also absent in *M. nodulointestinalis* and *M. impressus* however, a knob-like structure bearing a pore is present through which both the polar filaments are extruded together after crossing each other which differentiate them from the myxospore of the present study where the knob is absent. The presence of intercapsular process in *M. impressus*, *M. punjabensis*, *M. bliccae*, *M. vanivilasae*, *M. sushmii* and *M. nodulointestinalis* differentiate them from the present myxospores in which intercapsular process is absent. Furthermore, the presence of flat anterior end in the myxospores of *M. indirae* and *M. bliccae* differentiate them from the present myxospores in having broad anterior end. The elongated shape of myxospores in *M. nodulointestinalis* differentiate it from the present myxospores in having subspherical shape. In addition, the size of myxospores of *M. nigeriae* n. sp. are much smaller as compared to above mentioned species.

The differences discussed above indicate unique characteristics of the present species and is proposed as new to the science and named as *Myxobolus nigeriae* n. sp.

5. HISTOPATHOGENESIS

The plasmodium of *M. nigeriae* n. sp. is large located in the gill lamella of *S. niger*. The plasmodia are typed as intralamellar vascular type, LV₃ as per location in the secondary gill lamella. The plasmodia are round to oval and size ranging from 80-100 µm in diameter (Fig. 3). These plasmodia occupy whole of the gill lamella and due to enlarged diameter occupies interlamellar space thereby pushing the neighboring gill lamellae sideways, and also deforming them. This location is different from LV₁, LV₂ and LV₄ in which the plasmodia are located centrally, on the side and on the tip of the gill lamellae respectively. Furthermore, this type of plasmodia lead to deformation of whole of the infected gill lamellae in contrast to 1/4th in the LV₁, LV₂ and LV₄, therefore causing maximum loss of respiratory surface. Histological sections reveal hypertrophy of lamellar cells, inflammation, gill epithelial lifting and fusion of adjacent lamellae. Hyperplasia and vacuolization of the epithelial, vascular endothelial cells, goblet cells around the cysts are observed and due to the presence of myxospores within the lamellae, the blood vessels are dilated and bounding epithelial cells are highly stretched. The observations clearly indicated the destruction of the respiratory surface of *S. niger* infected with *M. nigeriae* n. sp. In view of above observation the parasite, *M. nigeriae* n. sp. is considered as highly pathogenic.

Similar observations were made by (Adriano et al., 2009) that the presence of plasmodia affect the gill functions and drastically reduces the respiratory surface. Myxoboliasis caused by myxozoans in the gills of *Catla catla* and gible carp were reported by (Sanaullah and Ahmed, 1980 and Dykova and Lom, 1978) which observed that infected carps with hemorrhagic condition and necrotic changes in the epithelia and in connective tissues of gills. Similarly it was observed in gill infections of American catfish with *Henneguya exilis* (MacCraren et al., 1975) in *Channa punctata* with *Henneguya waltirensis* (Kalavati and Narasimhamurti, 1985) and in carp with *Myxobolus koi* (Rukyani, 1990). Kaur and Katoch (2014) and (Kalavati and Narasimhamurti, 1985) observed that rupturing of cysts can also lead to hemorrhages, and sometimes may result in considerable loss of blood. In case of severe infection hypertrophy of the basal epithelial and goblet cells leading to increase in mucus production. The location of plasmodia in the intralamellar site was recorded to be associated with hypertrophy and inflammation. Cellular changes may lead to the fusion of adjoining secondary lamellae which was also reported by (Kaur et al., 2013b and Kaur and Katoch, 2014).

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